

Noche Buena

This year Hannukah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated December 24 through January 1. In Islam, Milad un Nabi, the Prophet's Birthday fell on December 12, 2016. Christmas, the birth of Jesus, is celebrated on December 25.

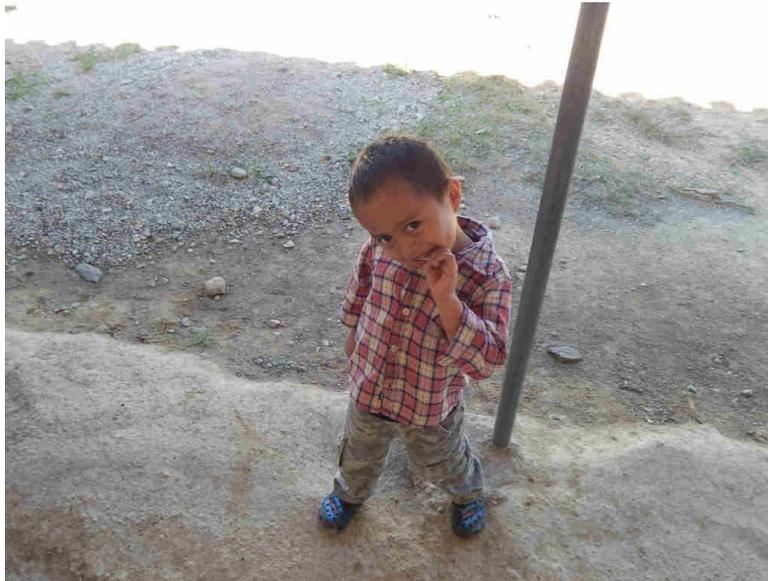


In Honduras, like in the United States, there is a legal separation of Church and State. In the United States, this legal separation is culturally applied, such that it is best described as a 'holiday' tree. In Honduras, every public meeting begins with a prayer. And yet, even though it is certainly clear that the celebration that begins in the evening of December 24 and continues into the morning hours of December 25 is a Christian celebration; its name is simply Noche Buena, The Good Night. Somehow, I find this inclusive name to be a fuller expression of what almost all of us believe about our humanity. It is essentially good. It is imbued with something that elevates it beyond what might be considered a mere scientific accident. Most of us want to affirm that life, my life and the life I experience around me, is good. I would even want to say that it is sacred. Life has a value that is immutable and transcendent, inspiring a sense of humility and awe. I guess I also believe that we should all put aside our particular creeds and concepts in order to offer but a simple moment of reflection and affirmation that life is good.



There is a man that walks the streets of Camasca and he has no shoes. He has only one set of clothes that are much too old to ever appear clean and they drape off his body. There is an expression on his face that never waivers, a haunting, frozen smile, as if he has no history or hope. I have never heard him speak, and don't know whether this is by choice or inability. He walks the streets of this town every day without a home or any possessions save what is with him at the moment. His survival obviously depends on those he meets from day to day.

The other day, he was walking toward Laura and I. He had in either hand a banana. As he came close to us, he extended his hand and the banana. He was offering us this gift. We declined. I think both Laura and I had tears in our eyes. This man was offering to us half of everything he had to eat with only faith that he would ever have more.



Laura and I are here with Shoulder to Shoulder to offer assistance to the poor. We are doing good work because we believe in its value. We raise money, thousands of dollars, to use toward overcoming endemic systems of inequality and poverty. We welcome professional health teams to serve people in great need. We are building a bilingual school to enrich the lives of children and families with quality education. We are doing tremendously important things. But our largess in generosity and service cannot even begin to compare in quantity or quality to the extraordinary gift of one banana. I am simply shaken to the depth of my being, humbled in the presence of such sanctity.

To all of You, we very humbly wish you a
Good Night!

Give in Honor of Life